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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Seventeenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)\* OF THE 122nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 19 November 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. CEAUSU

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\* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document E/C.12/1997/SR.32/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

RELATIONS WITH UNITED NATIONS ORGANS AND OTHER TREATY BODIES (agenda item 5)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited Mrs. Jimenez Butragueño to present her report on the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.
2. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUENO said that, at the opening meeting of its seventeenth session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) had been informed that the Commission on the Status of Women had considered the draft optional protocol concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had selected violence against women, women in armed conflicts and the rights of women and girls as priority topics. In that connection, the Commission had organized a number of preparatory meetings, including one in Toronto on the persecution of women, one in Finland on the economic and social rights of women and one in Addis Ababa on the rights of adolescent girls.
3. The Chairperson of CEDAW had reported on the organization of seminars and workshops in connection with the Convention, on the initiative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In particular there had been a round table in Jordan and another in Iran; the latter meeting was particularly noteworthy, as it was the first time it had been possible to discuss the Convention in Iran.
4. The Committee had considered the reports of nine countries, including Namibia and Luxembourg.
5. The Committee had welcomed the speed with which Namibia, following its long struggle for independence, had ratified the Convention. It had also welcomed the contribution of NGOs to the drafting of the report, the quality of the report and the spectacular progress made towards equality of the sexes. Examples of that progress were the law on the equality of spouses, the appointment of a woman to the post of ombudsman and the campaigns for raising awareness of the Convention among parliamentarians and civil servants. Nevertheless, the Committee had noted with concern the absence of an education programme to promote de facto equality, the low proportion of women in higher education and the high drop-out rate for schoolgirls. Other problems were the inadequacy of the legislation against rape, the presence of discrimination on the labour market and, despite the promulgation of new laws, the failure, especially in rural areas, to recognize the right of women to own land.
6. With regard to the report of Luxembourg, the Committee had stressed that the reservations expressed concerning article 7 (participation in political and public life) and article 16 (g) (equal rights for spouses as to the choice of a family name, a profession and an occupation) constituted obstacles to the implementation of the Convention. Moreover, the principle of equality of rights of both sexes was not clearly stated in the Constitution. The Committee had therefore recommended to the Government of Luxembourg the elimination of those obstacles, the promotion of greater participation by women in political and public activity, better integration of migrant and refugee women and more vigorous action to combat violence against women and sexual harassment.

7. It was interesting to note that working group 1, which had been given the task of improving the methods of work of the Committee, had stressed the need to reduce the number of reports so as to intensify collaboration between the Committee and the NGOs. Despite the improvements noted at the two most recent sessions, that collaboration had not yet been placed on an official basis. Working group 2 had decided that the adoption of general recommendations should follow a three-stage procedure: (a) general discussion devoted to the choice of topic, with the participation of specialized agencies and NGOs; (b) preparation by a member of the Committee, assisted by the Secretariat, of a preliminary draft to be considered within the working group, again in collaboration with the specialized agencies and NGOs concerned; (c) approval of the final draft by the working group and adoption of the general recommendation by the Committee in plenary session.

The public part of the meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.